



Chapter 7 Housing

Cluster 4 Asset Profile

The several neighborhoods of this cluster have individual attributes and differences. Many residential areas are isolated due to physical divisive elements such as the Lodge and Chrysler Freeways and large, non-residential land uses such as the Central Business District, Detroit Medical Center, Wayne State University, and many industrial districts. In addition, unique characteristics are reflected in the large time frame in which neighborhoods developed. These physical variables in combination with socio-economic characteristics cause strong individualism and limited comparisons between neighborhoods.

A large quantity of good housing stock is located in Cluster 4, including well-built historic homes. Residents feel that monies should be spent on rehabilitation of existing housing rather than on new construction. Residents do concede that new housing is needed in very blighted and vacant areas, and should be primarily affordable to the average potential homeowner. However, a range of low to upper income alternatives should be available to create social and economic diversity.

Community-based organizations are desirous of forging equitable partnerships with private sector developers and financiers to rebuild, restore and create affordable housing in their neighborhoods. There is a lack of confidence in commercial housing development by residents. The example cited at the focus group was the Core City neighborhood project. The general belief of residents is that it is unaffordable. Residents need to be involved in this process so that there will be a general trust on their behalf of the programs. There is a need for more resident education on housing options, development programs and financing programs.

Stakeholders perceive many assets in the neighborhoods. Some of the assets quoted were its community pride, the willing attitude of its residents, its community agencies and services, and its wealth of housing stock. When asked what had changed in their neighborhood since they've lived there, a majority reported a lack of focus, crime, and various problems associated with dealing with the City.

Existing Housing Conditions

The Cultural Center and Medical Center, as well as the southeastern area of the Cluster contain the majority of stable housing and need only reinforcement, as indicated on Map A15. As you move out to the west, east, and northeast sections, the houses are in greater need of revitalization and the opportunity for new infill construction to reinforce the existing neighborhoods are greater.

There is a variety of housing available. While preservation efforts to save some of the oldest houses in the city carry on, new developments are springing up. Creating lofts out of old

commercial buildings is also becoming quite popular. The broad mix of people living and working in the area and its location are seen as benefits to people considering moving into the area. Housing, employment, and entertainment are all within walking distance. The main problems as perceived by Cluster residents are crime, the lack City cooperation related to neighborhood concerns, and the lack of services available to residents (grocery stores, pharmacy, etc.)

Recent Projects

Recent housing projects, whether large, small, public or private, represent considerable investment in Cluster 4, indicated on the Residential Developments Map (A16). The perception of focus group attendees was that yes, there may be substantial investment in the Cluster, but is it the right kind of investment? Residents stated that previous development in the New Center Area and Lafayette Park was high end and catered more towards the upper middle class. This type of housing is generally unaffordable to the majority of Cluster 4 residents.

The point was made that housing needs to be provided for families and individuals from all income levels. Focus group participants also felt that there needs to be more loft type development in the Central Business District and north along Woodward. This could be a solution to keeping the large number of "empty nesters" who work in downtown, but do not live here. It was recognized that there were many factors other than the unavailability of quality housing that worked as deterrents to city living. These factors are discussed later as individual topics in greater detail.

Housing Ownership Characteristics

Cluster 4 is comprised of over two-thirds renter-occupied housing. Residents were concerned with the increase of renter-occupied housing in the cluster, because these properties are usually poorly maintained and often these residents do not become actively involved in neighborhood programs. Over 50% of individuals within Cluster 4 spend less than \$250 per month on contract rent.

Owner occupied	7,216 (19.1%)	
Renter occupied	30,469 (80.9%)	
Occupied units	37,683 (100.0%)	37,683 (81.0%)
Vacant		8,854 (19.0%)
<u>Total Units</u>		46, 537 (100.0%)

<u>Contract Rents</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Less than \$100	2,954	9.8%
\$100-249	14,046	46.7%
\$250-499	9,760	32.5%
\$500-749	1,985	6.6%
\$750 or more	832	2.7%
No cash rent	492	1.6%

Housing Values

As can be seen from the table below, the vast majority of housing within the cluster qualifies as "affordable".

<u>Housing Value</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>%</u>
Less than \$15,000	1,784	38.0%
\$15,000-24,999	1,018	21.7%
\$25,000-49,999	1,031	22.0%
\$50,000-99,999	693	14.8%
\$100,000+	170	3.5%

Best Locations for New Development

While in focus groups, attendees were asked to identify areas within the neighborhood that are ripe for redevelopment. The following Potential Housing Reinvestment Areas Map (A17) visually delineates these areas. Participants noted that developments incorporating a mix of housing styles would benefit the community the most.

New Large-Scale Single-Family Housing Development

Focus group attendees were asked to list the best locations for large-scale infill-housing projects in the cluster. The following locations were identified:

- Brush Park
- Cass Corridor
- Cultural Center
- Medbury Park
- New Center Area
- North End

Infill and Rehabilitation Housing Projects

Areas identified by focus group attendees as suitable locations for infill and rehabilitation projects are as follows:

- Brush Park
- North End
- Burlington Webb

Multi-Family Housing

Focus group attendees were asked to list the best locations for multi-family housing projects in the cluster. The following locations were identified:

- Brush Park
- East Grand Boulevard to Highland Park
- Cass Corridor
- Vernor and Chene Area
- North End

Issues

Neighborhood stakeholders and Cluster Board Members participated in focus group sessions that were designed to solicit community perceptions and identify issues effecting the cluster. Participants were also asked to fill out a survey form, or "instrumented group interview" (IGI), which would help to quantify the level of interest in the issue. Issues identified at the focus groups and by the IGIs are as follows:

- Removal of blight from neighborhoods and loss of "ghetto" qualities. This injures neighborhood linkages.
- Inadequate public transportation creates isolation. Current transit system is outdated and needs to be replaced. Area needs light rail/rapid transit.
- Neighborhoods are not pedestrian friendly. The width of some streets makes them difficult to cross. Sidewalks are poor and many of them are not handicap assessable.
- Community members need to be educated in existing code regulations and they need the cooperation of the City to ensure proper code enforcement.
- There is a general lack of skilled, licensed and bonded tradespersons to work on area homes.
- Lack of quality public schools in Cluster 4 keeps many families from moving into the area.
- Development of quality affordable housing to encourage people who work in the cluster and the city as a whole, to live in the area.

Assets and Barriers to Development in the Cluster

Cluster 4 focus groups identified several assets and barriers to the development of new housing and reinvestment in existing housing.

Assets

Location

All IGI respondents said that location was one of the most important assets in Cluster 4. Residents responded during the focus group meeting that Cluster 4's proximity to many "city hubs": institutions, recreation, entertainment and freeways; made it one of the most desirable locations to live within Detroit. These areas included:

- Central Business District
- New Center
- Wayne State University
- Cultural Center
- Medical Facilities
- Eastern Market
- Sports and Entertainment Centers
- Detroit River Waterfront

Residents noted that many of the institutions and organizations in Cluster 4 participate, to some degree, in housing development or community based outreach.

Historical Context

The need and desire for new housing were recognized, but residents stressed the importance of preserving old housing stock. During the focus group meeting residents outlined areas where they would like to see historic housing preserved. It was suggested that neighborhoods that were not already listed

on the National Register of Historic Places be nominated. Areas of interest and/or concern were Brush Park, Ferry Street, East Arden Park, Virginia Park, Boston Edison and the Cass Corridor.

The suggestion was made that if infill housing was to be placed in these areas it should be compatible with the historical fabric of the neighborhood.

Community Mix

Cluster 4 has a mix of residents from many different economic backgrounds. Neighborhood pockets of low, middle and high income occur throughout the cluster. With Wayne State University and Wayne Community College within its boundaries, Cluster 4 has many younger residents who are here while they go to school. There are also many neighborhoods in Cluster 4 that have stable, single-family housing. Neighborhoods that are marketable to all income levels are also a positive asset to the cluster.

During the focus group it was pointed out that many seniors choose to live near the medical centers for convenience reasons. A concern was expressed regarding future housing development and potential displacement of certain groups living in Cluster 4. Residents do not want to see the current balance changed.

Barriers

Crime

When asked how their neighborhoods have changed over the years, focus group attendees responded that crime-related issues had been on the rise. The most prevalent problems include increased drug use, more car thefts and break-ins, and more visible prostitution. Some residents suggested that bringing in solid housing would attract stable families and empty nesters, thus driving out drugs and prostitution.

Problems with the City

A major concern of the focus group participants was with the inadequate services provided by the City. Lack of code enforcement and City unresponsiveness to resident requests fell within this area of concern. Residents felt that development in Cluster 4 was hampered by City bureaucrats and that more could be done for the neighborhoods by removing restrictive governmental policies.

Lack of Amenities Related to Housing

Residents would like to see more retail within Cluster 4 that provides better goods and services than presently available. Stores need to be more accessible to individuals who work. This means that shops need to be located closer to target market groups and keep later hours. One resident from Brush Park commented that she envied people who lived in the New Center Area because good shopping was within walking distance.